

# **THE HISTORY OF THE STARK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT 1920-1995**

by: William J. Franks, MPH  
Health Commissioner

Researched by: Ruth Brunner  
Emily Caniford, RN, MSN  
Carmalee Hand-Cannane  
Marge Kazlauskas  
Lynn McCoy, RN, BSN  
Dianne Myers, LPN  
Mary Pfouts, RN

# THE HISTORY OF THE STARK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

## THE FIRST 75 YEARS

The Stark County Health Department was born on January 30, 1920 when the first meeting of the Board of Health was held. Board members present at the first meeting were R.E. White, president; Dr. C.A. Walker, vice president; I.W. Lerch; Dr. W.P. Hanna; and M.D. Crowl. The board began their work with a budget of \$9,750. In the first year of existence the board spent most of its time developing an organization and addressing some of our most serious public health problems. The most notable measure by the board was a resolution in November of 1920 directing the County Commissioners to provide a place to be used as an isolation hospital for contagious diseases and to provide maintenance of such. This was later to become the Molly Stark Hospital. This story is presented by chapters that represent decades. It was thought that this would be the best way to present the history to the reader. One must remember that disease knows no limits of time nor political boundaries; measures that have been effective in controlling diseases over the years must be continually practiced to protect the health of our community today.

## 1920's

In February of 1920 the Board hired DR. C.M. Peters as the first health commissioner. Dr. Peters was to serve for ten years as the commissioner. The first year the board also purchased a 1920 Ford touring car from Myers Auto Co. in Canal Fulton for \$696. The board purchased this car with the following options: electric starter, extra tire and tube, tire holder, and one set of chains. In April the first set of diseases were reported to the new health department: 21 cases of scarlet fever, 29 cases of measles, and one case of tuberculosis. George W. Kolp was appointed as the first sanitary inspector and the following deputy health officers were appointed: W.A. Daugherty (Jackson, Tuscarawas, and Perry Townships), S.E. Marchead (Paris Twp.),

Marshall (Lawrence Twp.), and Oscar Summers (Washington and Lexington Twps.). In August of 1920 the board approved a contract with the Red Cross to provide a public health nurse to the department. This nurse was Ida Meyers, who was paid a salary of \$125 per month.

Organizationally the health department was divided into three departments: contagious disease department, sanitation department and nursing department. The contagious disease department was given the task of quarantining all contagious diseases, ascertaining the source of infection, and preventing the spread of disease to other persons. The board appointed 12 health officers throughout the county whose duties were to quarantine all cases of contagious disease, forward the data to the Health Commissioner, release families from quarantine, and to fumigate and disinfect the premises. The sanitation department was charged with making regular general inspections of all townships and villages in the County twice per year, investigate and abate all complaints and nuisances, conduct prosecutions where necessary, and make weekly reports to the Health Commissioner. The scope of programs for the nursing department were: examination of school children, home visits of cases of contagious disease, bedside care, advice on prenatal care, care during confinement, and care of babies and school children.

The first attempts to protect the environment were taken in 1921 by the Board of Health. They adopted the first sanitary ordinance to regulate the installation and use of privies, cesspools, septic tanks, and to regulate the use of sanitary and storm water sewers. In March of 1921 the Board issued its first order to abate an environmental nuisance. The order was issued against the Canton Hog Ranch Co. on Waco-Mapleton Rd. for unsanitary conditions due to dead hogs left unburied; unsatisfactory disposal of waste, garbage, and other refuse; and stream pollution danger from improper drainage. That year they printed the first "no dumping" signs and issued the first order to connect to the sanitary sewer for a property on W. Main St. in Louisville.

As the 1920's progressed much effort was directed at reporting and controlling diseases. In February of 1922, 39 cases of smallpox were reported. That year, after much effort by the Health Commissioner and the County Commissioners, the Barber estate 2.5 miles South of Canton was purchased by the County as site of the TB hospital. The State Board of Health refused to consent to this site because of the drinking water and it had to be discarded. In 1924 the Commissioners purchased 43 acres of land in Nimishillen Twp. and in 1925 issued the bonds for construction of Molly Stark Hospital. August 23, 1929 Molly Stark Hospital was completed and open to the public.

In April of 1925 the Stark County Health Department and the State Health Department put on the first "well baby" conference in Minerva, Ohio. 182 babies and pre-schoolers attended the clinic. Additionally, the State Board of Health sent a force

of Doctors to Stark Co. to administer the Diphtheria Anti-Toxin to any child whose parents requested it. At the same time, the threatened smallpox epidemic in the Village of Beach City forced the Village Board of Education to pass a regulation requiring every child to be vaccinated before returning to school. Dr. Peters reported that he thereupon vaccinated 200 children attending school.

1926 was marked by the institution of many "well baby" clinics throughout the county. By the end of the year, 9 well baby clinic sites were established in the following communities: Minerva, Magnolia, Navarre, Waynesburg, Brewster, Louisville, Beach City, North Canton, and East Canton. (To this day the Stark County Board of Health operates satellite well child clinics throughout the County.). 1927 marked the beginning of concern over infantile paralysis (Polio). In September of 1927, seven cases were reported with five of those being from the Genoa School District. By November of that year, 20 cases of polio were reported and quarantined throughout the General Health District. Polio was to go on to be the most feared disease of parents of young children. The disease was responsible for lifetime paralysis or death to many of its victims. (It must be remembered that most vaccinations for diseases such as measles and polio had not been discovered during this period.)

## 1930's

Public health services in Stark County in the 1930's encountered many challenges. First of all our country was in the middle of the great depression, which hit in 1929. Government had little money to provide needed services and people had little money available to buy needed health care, provide a sanitary environment or to pay for government services through the tax base. The distribution of diphtheria antitoxin and smallpox vaccine helped to bring two major plagues under control. Many homes converted to indoor plumbing, but many times the runoff from the septic tanks created worse environmental hazards. The Board of Health had to be careful not to put too great of a burden on the average citizen, who had barely enough money for just the minimal needs of life. The three factors which controlled the public health in Stark County in the 1930's were the economy, communicable diseases, and environmental concerns. Each will be discussed in this chapter.

### THE ECONOMY

The Great Depression had a monumental effect on public health in Stark County. In 1930 the Health Department had a budget of \$35,119 and by 1934 the budget was reduced to \$16,500. The Township Trustees Association had been attending many Board of Health meetings with suggestions for the Board to reduce

their expenditures. Eventually the Board had no choice but to cut back in order to stay within financial boundaries. In 1931 the Board made its first economic moves: it eliminated the position of Food and Dairy Inspector; closed its Massillon office, which was located at the Boy Scout offices; and eliminated the allowance for personal automobile use.

In 1930 Dr. C. M. Peters retired as health commissioner and was replaced by Dr. Floyd Stamp. Dr. Stamp's salary was set at \$3,800 per year. Dr. Stamp served in 1931 and 1932. In 1933 the Board replaced Dr. Stamp with Dr. O.C. Ricksecker, from Wilmot. Dr. Ricksecker gave the Board a proposal to be health commissioner for \$2,400 per year. The next meeting Dr. Stamp agreed to work as Health Commissioner for \$2,400 per year, but when the Board tried to rescind the motion to hire Dr. Ricksecker the prosecutor ruled that they could not do so. Therefore, Dr. Ricksecker served as health commissioner for one year and Dr. Stamp was returned as health commissioner in 1934. Dr. Stamp served as health commissioner for the remainder of the 1930's.

Most of the early part of the 1930's was spent in reducing costs wherever feasible. Eventually the Board reduced the public health nurses from five to three, the health officer inspectors from four to two, disconnected the phone in the health commissioner's office and took many other cost saving efforts to stay within their limited budget. Many months the health commissioner travelled over 2,000 miles in his own vehicle without mileage compensation on the \$200 per month salary. The remainder of the Health Department staff served at the same salary throughout the entire decade. There were no such things as raises.

## Communicable Diseases

The 1930's started out with a major smallpox outbreak. There were 48 cases reported in January of 1930. 109 cases would eventually be reported for all of 1930. Other diseases of major importance in the 1930's were diphtheria, measles, chicken pox, whooping cough, and scarlet fever. Although most of our modern vaccines were not yet developed against these diseases, there were preventive inoculations that helped curb the spread of these diseases during that decade. The distribution of antitoxin for diphtheria and the vaccine against smallpox become major issues for the health department. Thousands of children were inoculated at the schools throughout the decade. Two diseases (smallpox and diphtheria) that were feared by parents at the beginning of the decade were hardly ever reported by 1940. As government depression programs were implemented, the Board was able to take on three CWS nurses to help administer the Diphtheria toxoid vaccination. This was a major help in controlling that disease. In 1935 Stark County experienced a major Scarlet Fever outbreak.

A disease of major importance in the 1930 was measles. There were at least two major outbreaks of measles in the 1930's, one in 1934 and the other in 1937-38. The outbreak in 1934 was by far the worse of the two. 408 cases of measles were reported in March and 400 homes were quarantined. In May of 1934, 532 cases of measles were reported. 50 homes in North Industry alone were quarantined for measles. At one point the Medical Society complained to the Board about the health department quarantining homes without a medical visit. The Board responded that the outbreak was too great for Dr. Stamp to get around to all of the homes and their finances precluded them from hiring additional medical help.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL**

In the 1930's Stark County residents began a major push to install indoor plumbing into their homes. This caused some major environmental problems in our more populated areas with septic tank runoff into the streams and lakes. Another major issue that indoor plumbing caused was the need for a plumbing code and a plumbing inspector. In 1931 the County Plumbers Association began meeting with the Board to convince them of the need for a countywide plumbing code. The Board resisted due to the economy and the hardship it would place on individual homeowners. Finally in 1939 the Board passed its first plumbing and sanitary code for Stark County.

Most of the environmental problems in the '30's were handled directly by the Board of Health at the monthly meetings. The Board found themselves in the position of having a huge amount of discretionary authority and they weren't afraid to exercise it. For instance, in 1930 they ordered Mr. James Ballinger to move his hog ranch from the vicinity of Perry Center School to a more suitable location. The Board also denied a swimming pool for Canal Fulton that would take water directly from the canal for the pool. The Board claimed that too many storm drains empty into the canal. The Board even issued orders to the County Commissioners to provide the sewers to portions of Perry Twp. in which 85% of the septic tanks were draining into Sippo Lake.

Sometimes the environmental philosophy of the '30's was so different from ours today that the stories seem almost unbelievable. For instance, the commissioner investigated septic tanks draining into a ditch but stated that it didn't involve the Board as no one's health was being affected. After continued citizen persistence the health officer went out and found 14 families emptying their septic tanks into the storm water sewer that emptied into the ditch. He did not think that the complaint was sufficient grounds to order the 14 families to discontinue their indoor plumbing and erect outside toilets to abate this small nuisance. Later the sanitary surveyor recommended that the sewer be constructed and the 14 families be required to hook on at a cost of \$75.00.

The Board felt that due to the economic times it would have been too much of a hardship on the families and when times became better then they would act on the recommendation.

In 1931 the Board eliminated the position of food and dairy inspector. This position was held by a veterinarian. This was an unfortunate move that the Board was forced to make because there was no mandatory pasteurization of milk and many illnesses were attributable to unwholesome milk. In 1933 the State Milk Producers Association began meeting with the Board asking them to raise the milk permit fee so that the inspector could be rehired and stricter inspection of the dairies could be instituted. However, in 1934 the State Milk Law went into effect. Anyone having two or more cows must have a permit. The Board instituted a \$1.00 permit fee but soon after the State also imposed a \$1.00 permit fee. Seeing the double fee as a financial burden, the Board eliminated their fee and the program was again left unfunded. By June of 1935 the State Milk Law expired and was not renewed by the legislature.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

In the second half of the decade many of the governmental recessionary programs were starting to help the public health causes. Public health nurses were available for disease control, the state health department placed a nurse consultant into the offices of the county health department, and the Board hired Stanley Strine, a sanitary engineer, as its first environmental expert. The Stark County Board of Health has never been a group to pass up the latest in technology. In November of 1931 they gave a health talk to the East Canton Parent Teacher Association using moving pictures from the State. After that they authorized the health commissioner to take the State's moving picture machine around to other groups in the county. It is believed that to this day the department still has the original moving picture machine in its storeroom.

# 1940's

The 1940's were the war years. As our country was coming out of the depression the war had the effect of boosting the economy. More homes were converted to indoor plumbing, septic tank installations were increasing, and the

potential for unsanitary environmental conditions called for stricter enforcement by the board of health. With the increase in staffing, the department had outgrown their quarters in the courthouse and moved out to the Fogle home on Cleveland Ave.

The major communicable disease control measure was still the quarantine. With a full force of health officers, the health department had as many as 90 homes quarantined at one time. The enormous push by the health department to have children vaccinated with diphtheria anti toxin was successful in reducing the incidence of diphtheria in the community. Despite these efforts cases of diphtheria were still being reported throughout the '40's. Other diseases that had been routinely reported and quarantined were chicken pox, measles, mumps, scarlet fever, polio, and meningitis. A central registry for tuberculosis cases was established in the county per Ohio law. The registry was located at Molly Stark Hospital and was intended to track all tuberculosis patients and their contacts, and to assure hospitalization of those active cases.

Physicians routinely visited homes and even performed tonsillectomies on the kitchen tables. With the war effort many women left their homes and went to work. This required a work permit issued by the Health Department. The department purchased audiometers to be used in the schools to do hearing checks on all school children.

With the increase in indoor plumbing more road ditches and streams were being polluted with sewage. The sanitary division was kept busy designing septic systems that did not fail and issuing orders for the repair of failing systems. The increase in the sanitary inspection staff allowed for the inspection of dairies, boarding houses, and places holding liquor licenses. Regulations were prepared and adopted governing the sanitation of campgrounds, cabins, and trailer parks. The regulations provided for the collection of a fee to cover the cost of the inspections.

Having served as Health Commissioner for 17 years, Dr. Floyd Stamp died in 1947. The Board replaced Dr. Stamp with Dr. H.B. Underwood in August of 1947. Dr. Underwood served for less than one year and resigned in May of 1948. At this time, the Board felt that it was necessary to hire a full time health commissioner again and hired Dr. P.L. Harris at an annual salary of \$8,500 plus \$50 a month for travel allowance.



# 1950's

## THE WAR ON POLIO

The 1950's marked the end of the war years and the beginning of the baby boom era. As soldiers returned from the war, families grew causing a major increase in the numbers of children in the county. There were major outbreaks of childhood diseases such as measles and polio. A housing boom occurred in the suburbs in order to accommodate the new families. This brought with it the need for stricter environmental regulations for sewage, plumbing, and water systems. The schools were becoming overcrowded and many new school buildings were constructed. There was an increasing demand for school health services. The population boom coupled with the post war affluence created many new public health challenges for the Stark County Health Department. Dr. P. L. Harris served as the Health Commissioner throughout the decade of the 50's and through his leadership and direction the Stark County Health Department was able to meet the new challenges facing the public's health.

Special attention must be paid to one of the greatest public health victories of the century, that is winning the war on polio. With the post war baby boom many of the new parents lived in constant fear that their children would be stricken with this most feared crippling disease. Many theories were presented as to how polio was spread. The most commonly accepted one was that it was spread through the housefly. It hadn't been very long that researchers had identified polio as a virus which was spread through person to person contact. This information was what was needed to begin the war on polio. The fact that the disease was identified as being caused by a virus allowed researchers to begin work on a vaccine. The fact that the cause of spread was identified as person to person allowed public health professionals to better implement isolation techniques to minimize the spread.

1952 marked the peak year for reported polio cases in the General Health District with 114. About the same time gamma globulin was beginning to be used as a passive preventive measure for polio. The Salk polio vaccine had now been licensed and was being produced for distribution. In 1954 the Salk Polio Vaccine was introduced for use in Stark County and in 1955 the Stark County Health Department began massive vaccination clinics in the schools. That year 7,000 first and second graders were vaccinated with the Salk Vaccine. In 1960, after years of research in his University of Cincinnati laboratory, Dr. Sabin developed and had licensed the Sabin Oral Vaccine. These vaccination efforts were so successful in eliminating the threat of Polio that the last reported case of Polio in the General Health District was in July of

1963. The war on Polio had been won, the threat of Polio had been eliminated.

Polio was not the only scourge on the children of Stark County in the 50's. Outbreaks of Tuberculosis occurred at Hartville School, Middlebranch School, and Canal Fulton School. In 1954, 4,909 children were patch tested for TB with 38 being positive. In 1955, 9,600 children were tested with 51 positive. Between the years of 1951 through 1954, Magnolia and Plain Center Schools were closed because of the flu; Beach City School was closed due to an outbreak of whooping cough; there was a Diphtheria outbreak in Hartville; an infectious hepatitis outbreak at Middlebranch School and a food poisoning outbreak at Central Catholic High School.

Other health prevention measures adopted by the Board of Health in the 1950's included: purchasing penicillin for venereal disease cases; provision of Diphtheria Antitoxin; provision of gamma globulin; provision of duck embryo rabies vaccine to County physicians; licensing of Shadyside Hospital in N. Canton as a maternity hospital; establishment of a milk laboratory; and the development of school dental exams.

The major environmental health program of the 1950's was the development of the restaurant inspection program. After years of planning, the program was begun in 1954. Mr. Ralph Mooney was hired as district sanitarian to oversee the implementation of the restaurant inspection program in September of 1953. Under Mr. Mooney's direction the department inspected and licensed 320 food handling places during the first year of the program. Other environmental programs developed during the decade included regulations covering: water well installers; refuse dumps; motel inspections; water and septic inspections for FHA loans; refuse haulers; and agricultural labor camps. The new refuse dump regulations outlawed all open dumping and required all dumps to be converted to sanitary landfills. With the implementation of these regulations five dumps were closed and two new ones were opened resulting in a total of 11 licensed landfills operating by the end of the decade.

There were other significant developments in Stark County's Public Health scene during the 1950's. In 1951 the first vital statistics registrar was hired. In 1952 the Canton Academy of Medicine and the Canton Chamber of Commerce requested information concerning the possibility of Canton Health and Stark County Health having unified services. In 1953 the Dept. of Agriculture and Stark County Health Dept. cooperated in closing meat sales at the Hartville Auction. The Board of Health petitioned County Commissioners for sanitary sewer projects for both Whipple Hts. and Moffit Hts. due to many sewage problems. In 1959 Board of Health member compensation was increased from \$3 per day to \$6 per day per Ohio Law. The District Advisory Council wrote a letter to the Budget Commission in 1959 requesting funds for the Health Department to bring the per capita for health services to at least \$1 per person per year.

# 1960's

The 1960's could be termed the decade of Tuberculosis. Not because there was so much more TB than any other point in time, but because there was so much case finding going on that the number of reported cases was at its peak. Not only were school children routinely skin tested for TB, but the mobile chest x-ray units were covering Stark County very thoroughly. Routinely 40 to 50 active cases of Tuberculosis were reported to the Stark County Health Department on a monthly basis. In July 1963, 68 cases were reported. 576 Louisville students were TB skin tested with 31 coming up positive. In April of 1964, nine first grade students at Genoa School were found to be positive TB reactors. It was found that all nine children had attended a play school the previous year and their teacher was now an active TB patient at Molly Stark Hospital.

In the Spring of 1964 the Stark County Health Department had to deal with epidemics of measles, chicken pox, and scarlet fever. In one month alone 241 cases of measles were reported to the department. However, just as the 50's featured the introduction of the Polio vaccine, the 60's featured the introduction of the measles vaccine. In October of 1966 the first 200 doses of measles vaccine was received by the health department for use in the clinics. By June of 1969 the Board of Health required measles vaccination of all children entering school in the General Health District.

Administratively, the Health Department moved from the Fogle home on Cleveland Ave to the County Office Building in the St. Francis Hotel in August 1961. After 18 years of service, Dr. Harris announced his retirement as Health Commissioner effective Jan. 15, 1967. In April of 1967 the Board hired Dr. Leroy Dalheim as health commissioner. Dr. Dalheim served for slightly over one year. In June of 1968 Dr. R. Winters Frankmann was hired and health commissioner. Dr. Frankmann served until his death in 1970. In 1965 Stanley Strine retired from the department and Joseph Dopler was hired as the Environmental Health Director. On August 19, 1967 Katie Adams retired as department secretary after 45 years of service.

In the 1960's the first State and Federal Grants were directed to the Stark County Health Department. In 1963 a Federal Migrant Health Proposal was approved. This allowed the department to hire a sanitarian, nurse, dentist, dental assistant, and clerk for the program. It also allowed the Board to issue operational permits for agricultural labor camps. In 1966, two Hartville camps refused to obtain permits, thus

Judge Graham issued an order closing them. In 1965 the Federal Maternal and Child Health Program funds were awarded to the Department. This allowed the Board to hire Mary Pfouts as a public health nurse on that program. The Board also approved a contract with the Ohio Department of Health to help rehabilitate Army rejectees at \$10.00 per case. This program dissolved as most rejectees considered themselves fortunate to avoid the draft and were not interested in rehabilitation. The Board also approved resolutions to receive State and Federal funds for nursing visits on the Crippled Children's Program and the Medicare Home Visit Program.

Other health related issues noteworthy of recognition will be discussed. In 1963 the Board approved plans for food service and plumbing for a new Osteopathic Doctors Hospital in Perry Township. In 1967 the Board approved Doctors Hospital for the provision of maternity care. In June of 1964 several people in Waynesburg requested a well child clinic and volunteered Dr. Panisuk to staff it. In August of 1964 that clinic was opened. To this date the Health Department still operates a well child clinic in Waynesburg. In 1964 the nurses attended a conference on venereal diseases in our teenage population. During May of 1965 the Board instructed the nursing staff to begin educational programs on venereal disease in the schools, YMCA's, and YWCA's. In 1965 the Board passed a resolution expressing a willingness to discuss the possibility of Massillon City joining the Stark County Combined Health District.

It is most worthy to note that as a result of the 1960 census, the villages of Louisville and North Canton officially became cities. As a city they were considered to be their own health district and could have had their own health department. Instead, both cities voted to remain in the General Health District and become a Combined General Health District.

## 1970's

The 1970's began with tuberculosis case finding, as was the same throughout the 60's. By April of 1970, the Health Department skin tested 8,178 children in 75 schools with 19 testing positive. Three children were identified as primary tuberculosis cases and two children were admitted to Molly Stark Hospital. Massive tuberculosis screening in schools and places of employment continued through the early part of the 1970's. Soon major steps were initiated in the fight against TB. New drugs and treatments were developed to stop the spread on TB in the lungs at early stages. Not only were they effective in holding the disease in remission, but the drugs were most highly effective in rendering the TB patient non communicable to those around them. This was a milestone for public health's fight against TB. Patients that could be rendered non communicable no longer needed to be hospitalized at Molly Stark and no

longer needed strict isolation and quarantine measures. The 1970's marked the beginning of the end of Molly Stark Hospital as a tuberculosis hospital.

In 1971 Dr. Lloyd Dowell, Massillon City Health Commissioner, was appointed as part time Health Commissioner to succeed Dr. Frankmann. Environmental Health Director, Joseph Dopler was awarded the "Outstanding Sanitarian Award" by the Ohio Environmental Health Association at the annual State meeting in 1971. In 1974 Miss Sara Bayes announced her retirement as Nursing Director.

During the 1970's, the department moved back to decentralizing the clinic services to outlying satellite clinics. Well child and immunization satellite clinics were established in North Canton and Greentown; Sickle Cell Anemia clinics were established in Canton, Plain, Sandy, and Osnaburg townships; and the WIC program was started in 1977 through a contract with the Canton City Health Department. In the wake of a national concern for a return of the Swine Flu, the department set up various Swine Flu clinic sites through 1976. A total of 36,226 doses of Swine Flu Vaccine were administered to residents of the general health district. The epidemic never occurred in Ohio. In 1974 the State V.D. unit reported an increase of 20% in the number of Syphilis cases in Stark County. During the 1970's, 2,361 cases of gonorrhea and 221 cases of syphilis were reported in the General Health District. As a result of this increase and the total number of gonorrhea cases, the State mandated venereal disease education for all school children in grades seven through twelve.

Environmentally, the USEPA was created in 1970 and the Ohio EPA in 1972. This created an entirely new level of government for Stark County residents. The health department was again needed to help local residents deal with these new agencies. In 1973 the Board passed a resolution calling for the permit and inspection of all semi-public wastewater treatment plants. These regulations were the result of malfunctioning systems which were polluting Stark County's water ways. The Industrial Excess Landfill was converted from an industrial waste site to a strictly domestic solid waste site. However, even then the Ohio EPA and the Stark County Health Department were investigating the site for possible ground water table contamination. In 1977 the Board of Health entered into a contract with the State to begin a mosquito spraying program, due to the massive outbreak of St. Louis Encephalitis in Ohio. In Stark County alone 41 children were afflicted with St. Louis Encephalitis through the 1970's. The contract called for the department to begin a program of surveillance, larvaciding and adultciding of mosquitoes. The department was required to send its first set of employees to Columbus for training and certification as pesticide operators. Finally, in 1977 the plumbing contract with the county was amended. The building department took over the residential plumbing inspections and the Health Department retained the commercial inspections.

# 1980's

The 1980's marked a shift in Public Health direction and programming in Stark County. It had not been very long that we had controlled the major threats of the past such as polio, tuberculosis, smallpox, and diphtheria when a new breed of communicable diseases like AIDS, toxic E. Coli, encephalitis, and hepatitis began to infect our community. The 1980's also marked a shift into the health department attacking the chronic diseases of heart disease, stroke, and cancer through health education programs, cholesterol screening, health risk appraisals, and blood pressure clinics. Child health clinic were expanded through State and Federal block grant programs and the WIC program was established as a major public health measure in children's nutritional needs.

If the 1980's were to be identified with any particular disease, it would have to be identified with AIDS. AIDS was first identified in 1981 by two physicians, acting independently on the different coasts of our country. The first case of AIDS was identified in the Stark County General Health District in 1982. A major fear set in after some nationally recognized celebrities died of the disease. Because there was no cure for the disease, nor a vaccine, the best control efforts were those of individual education. With no funds to hire professional educators in the early days of the disease, the health commissioners of the four health departments in the county spent tireless hours in mornings, evenings and weekends meeting with various groups including: PTA's, employee groups, civic groups, medical groups, clubs, school groups, teachers, and law enforcement officials bringing them the latest information on this unknown disease that had struck so much fear into our society. There was so much myth being circulated regarding the disease that as much time was spent explaining how you don't get AIDS as was spent explaining how you do get the disease. The biggest fear and the most difficult to dispel was the notion that AIDS was spread through the bite of the mosquito and we would all fall victim to the disease no matter what preventive health practices people adopted.

The decade marked the decentralization of child health services into the County. In 1984 the State awarded the General Health District a Maternal and Child Health block grant in the amount of \$335,000 to expand and develop well child services throughout the County. Under the grant, clinic sites were established in Waynesburg, Navarre, Canal Fulton, Greentown, and Louisville. Established clinics sites at North Canton and the Shipley Clinic in Canton were expanded with regard to the services offered. The focus of the clinics was to provide: well child care; physical assessments; social assessments; growth and development assessments; vision, speech and hearing screenings; and nutritional counseling. In 1989 the department held 188 well child clinics and served 2,551 children compared to 1200 children served in the 1982.

In 1984 the department was awarded a contract from the Canton Health Dept. through the Preventive Health block grant in the amount of \$43,000. These funds allowed the Board to hire a full time health educator to begin the monumental task of educating the population on lifestyle choices and changes that lead to the chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer and stroke. Educational efforts were started with regard to blood pressure control, exercise, diet, tobacco use, alcohol use, nutrition, and injury control. As a result of this grant, the health department hosted the first national "Commitment to Wellness" Conference in Canton, Ohio in 1985.

Other meaningful medical events and first during the decade included:

- 1984 the first two nurses were sent to Cleveland for training as PNA's (Pediatric Nurse Associates)

- The Dueble Foundation bought the first tympanometer for the child health clinics.

- 1986 the board added the Hemophilus Influenza B (HIB) vaccine to the childhood immunization regime.

- 1986 the department investigated a cluster of childhood cancer cases in Lexington Twp. but was unable to find a common exposure.

- 1985 the first Community Diagnosis was initiated in the County through a contract with NEOUCOM.

- In 1989 there was a major measles outbreak in the State that affected the General Health District. Over 100 cases were reported to the health department. This outbreak brought to light the need for a mandatory measles booster that is now required.

- 1987 the board purchased its first reflotron machine to do cholesterol screenings in the community. That year over 8700 people were screened for their cholesterol level.

- 1987 the first Annual Report was published in the Free Press.

- 1989 a major Salmonella outbreak was reported in Northeastern Ohio. A total of 102 cases were reported from Stark County General Health District. No common source of infection was isolated.

-In 1987, 14 cases of E. Coli gastroenteritis were reported from a daycare center in Jackson. Seven of the infants were hospitalized.

-In 1987 three cases of mosquito borne La Crosse Encephalitis were reported in children in the Beach City area.

-1987 mandatory Sanitarian Registration bill passes for Ohio. All local health department sanitarians are now required to be registered.

-In 1987 the board conducted the first radon study of homes located outside of Magnolia, Ohio due to reports of high levels in peoples' homes. Only one home of the 20 tested showed high levels of radon.

The 1980's were very busy with regard to environmental issues. In 1980, the board sought and received a court order to close the Industrial Excess Landfill in Uniontown. As the decade passed the site was placed on the US superfund list and much contrary surrounded the clean up of the site. Other environmental issues of the 1980's included LTV proposing a hazardous waste disposal site for their electric arc furnace dust. This was met with much opposition from citizens and public officials. TRW in Minerva took measures to clean up contaminated wells from some chemical lagoons that were on the site. Teledyne Monarch Rubber in Hartville installed an air stripper to clean up the portions of the water table that were contaminated from previous solvent disposal. In 1989 the Board of Health adopted the Construction and Demolition Waste Disposal Site regulations. These were the first set of regulations of this type in Ohio and became the model for the State. In 1983, after three cases of rabies in animals in the County, the Board issued an emergency order requiring mandatory rabies vaccination of all dogs in the County. Subsequently, in collaboration with the other health departments, the animal warden's office, and the Stark County Veterinary Academy, public rabies vaccination clinics were set up throughout the County. That year over 5,000 dogs were vaccinated for rabies at these clinics.

As the number of cases of mosquito borne encephalitis increased so did the need for the mosquito spraying program. Each year three summer employees were hired to do the mosquito spraying program. However, in 1985 the County Commissioners impounded the mosquito trucks due to the lack of funds to put them on the road. The mosquito infestation was so bad that year and the people complained so much that eventually the trucks were released by the commissioners and through a sharing of the costs the program was able to be resumed. However, later that year the trucks were declared unroad worthy by the Commissioners, due to their aged condition. The following year the board purchased two used trucks for the program with \$10,000 they encumbered for that purpose. In 1987 the Asian Tiger Mosquito was introduced into the US and Ohio through tires shipped here from Europe. After much surveillance no strains of this mosquito were found in Stark County.



Administratively, Dr. Lloyd Dowell retired in 1981. The Board went for almost two years without a health commissioner as they searched. In the interim, Mr. Jay Karlin, Board President, assumed the duties of the Health Commissioner. In 1983 the Board appointed William J. Franks as the Health Commissioner. He came to Stark from the Columbiana County Health Department where he served as health commissioner. In 1986 the county office building was cited by the city for numerous fire and safety violations. Although the building had not been officially condemned, the actions prompted the board to appoint a committee to study the office space issue. They engaged in numerous discussions and legal battles over the next five years before the office was relocated to its present quarters in Plain Township. In June of 1984 the board was informed that a lawsuit was filed before the State Board of Tax Appeals by two townships with regard to the Health Department's budget. After a nearly three year legal battle, the Board had to make restitution to all of the townships for unspent and unencumbered funds that were left in the account balance of the health district. Finally, in 1989 the department received a State AIDS grant to hire a health educator for the purpose of educating the public about AIDS.

## 1990's

The 1990's began with the issue of the health department looking for new quarters. The conditions within the County Office Building were becoming less safe as time passed. The Commissioners issued statements of uncertainty with regards to the building in January of 1990. In 1991 the County purchased the Citizens Savings building in downtown Canton, but there were no plans for inclusion of the Health Department in that building. Later that year the County offered the second floor of the Board of Elections offices to the Board. After an engineering study the Board rejected that offer as unsuitable quarters and appointed a committee search for new office quarters. When the Board announced that they would move the offices to Convenience Cir. in Plain Twp., certain individuals in the City of Canton filed a lawsuit to block the move of the health department out of the city of Canton. In December of 1991, the Board voted to accept the settlement terms of the court and in January of 1992, the department's offices were moved to Convenience Cir.

The 90's may mark the decade in which closer collaboration or combination of the health departments occurred in the county. In 1990 the Board adopted a mutual aid resolution with the other three health departments in the County. In 1992 they passed a resolution encouraging talks on the combination of the four health departments. In 1993 Canton City and Stark County officials met to discuss a contract to study the combination of the health departments. In September the Board authorized a contract

with the Federation for Community Planning to do a combination study. This study was completed in 1994.

As the 1920's marked the beginning of Molly Stark Hospital, the 1990's may mark the closing of that hospital. The attack on tuberculosis has been so successful that very few cases are ever in need of hospitalization. Because of this, the Board of County Commissioners has authorized the closing of the hospital in 1995. However, a new strain of tuberculosis, the drug resistant strain, was reported in Stark County in 1990. One of these cases refused to obtain adequate treatment for the disease in 1993. This prompted the Board to issue an order to the tuberculosis patient to make themselves available for mandatory treatment at Cleveland Metro General Hospital.

During the 1990's there were many public health care programs initiated. After much work by the dental task force, the dental health clinic was first opened in March of 1993. It didn't take long before there was a long waiting list of people needing services of the clinic. Adult immunizations became major programs throughout the county. Annual flu shot clinics each fall gained popularity among the public. In 1992 after all the clinics were finished, we responded to an early flu epidemic with an emergency flu clinic in December of that year. Over 700 residents were vaccinated in one night of this special clinic. In 1993, 5500 flu shots were administered to county residents. Hepatitis B vaccinations began to be administered to employee groups at risk of exposure. These groups included: paramedic squads, city recreation departments, fire departments, police departments, and employees of MRDD. In 1992 the Stark County SAFE KIDS Coalition was launched with Stark County Health Department as the lead agency. Through 1993 the coalition had programs in place regarding bicycle helmet safety, home smoke detectors, and infant car seat programs.

Environmentally, the public water supply line was completed in the Northwest area of Uniontown. Many people requested variances to keep their private well in operation, after they hooked on to the community water supply. In August of 1993, the Board held their monthly meeting in Uniontown for the purpose of being more accessible to the public in hearing the variance requests. Another area of groundwater contamination occurred on Klotz Ave. in Nimishillen Twp. Petroleum products were found by the Ohio EPA to be contaminating drinking water wells in the area. In 1994 the County approved plans to run city water to this area. The decade also marked the proliferation of chicken grow out facilities in Northeastern Stark County. Numerous complaints of dust, odor, and histoplasmosis by neighbors of the growout facilities prompted many health department investigations. At no time did laboratory specimens substantiate the accusations. In 1994 the Board of Health adopted regulations to control tattoo parlors and also amended the sewage regulations.